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TAGS: [CASC](#) [PTER](#) [AMGT](#) [ASEC](#) [IS](#) [GZ](#) [WE](#)

SUBJECT: TRAVEL WARNING - ISRAEL, THE WEST BANK, AND  
GAZA

1. The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of traveling to Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, and about threats to themselves and to U.S. interests in those locations. The Department of State urges U.S. citizens to remain mindful of security factors when planning travel to Israel and the West Bank and to avoid all travel to the Gaza Strip. This warning replaces the Travel Warning issued January 15, 2009, to update information on the general security environment in Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip.

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The Gaza Strip and Southern Israel  
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2. The State Department strongly urges that American citizens refrain from all travel to the Gaza Strip. This recommendation has been in effect since the deadly roadside bombing of a U.S. Embassy convoy in Gaza in October 2003. It applies to all Americans, including journalists and aid workers. American citizens should be aware that as a consequence of a longstanding prohibition on travel by U.S. Government employees into the Gaza Strip, the ability of consular staff to offer timely assistance to U.S. citizens there is extremely limited.

3. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) strictly controls travel within the area of the crossing points between Israel and the Gaza Strip, and has essentially sealed the border. The security environment within Gaza and along its borders, including its border with Egypt and its seacoast, is dangerous and can change at any time.

4. From December 27, 2008, through January 17, 2009, the IDF conducted a major military operation in Gaza that included aerial and naval strikes, followed by

large-scale ground operations. Israel and Hamas, a State Department-designated foreign terrorist organization that violently seized power in Gaza in June 2007, declared separate truces to end the fighting. Occasional small clashes continue to occur along the border. Rockets and mortars are still being fired into Israel from Gaza, and the IDF continues to conduct military operations inside Gaza, including airstrikes. The IDF has also declared an exclusion zone along the border with Israel and has taken lethal measures against individuals who enter it.

15. In the past, some rockets have travelled more than 40 km and landed as far north as Yavne and Gadera and as far east as Beersheva. As a result of possible IDF military operations in Gaza and the ever-present risk of rocket and mortar attacks into Israel from Gaza, U.S. Government personnel travelling in the vicinity of the Gaza Strip border, to include the city of Sderot, require approval from the Embassy's Regional Security Office.

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The West Bank  
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16. The security environment in the West Bank has improved markedly since June 2007, with a significant increase in the number of trained Palestinian Authority security forces deployed to urban areas such as Jericho, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Jenin. Nonetheless, demonstrations and violent incidents can occur without warning. Vehicles have also been the target of rocks, Molotov cocktails and gunfire on West Bank roads. The Department of State urges Americans to exercise caution

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when traveling to the West Bank.

17. The IDF continues to carry out security operations in the West Bank. Israeli security operations can occur at any time, including arrest raids to arrest terrorist suspects that lead to disturbances and violence. Americans can be caught in the middle of potentially dangerous situations. Some Americans involved in demonstrations and other such activities in the West Bank have become involved in confrontations with Israeli settlers and the IDF. The State Department recommends that Americans, for their own safety, avoid demonstrations.

18. All those who pass through the West Bank should exercise particular care when approaching and transiting Israeli military checkpoints. Travelers should be aware that they might encounter delays and difficulties, and might even be denied passage through a checkpoint. American citizens should be aware that the ability of consular staff to offer timely assistance to U.S. citizens in the West Bank is limited.

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Travel Restrictions for U.S. Government Personnel  
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19. American U.S. Government personnel travel extensively throughout the West Bank to carry out their official duties. USG personnel on official business travel more freely in the cities of Jericho, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Jenin due to the improved security situation there. Personal travel in the West Bank for U.S. Government personnel and their dependents is not allowed except for limited mission-approved purposes and in the areas described below. U.S. government personnel and family members are permitted to travel to Jericho, or to transit through the West Bank by using routes 1 and 90 to reach the Allenby/King Hussein Bridge, or the

Dead Sea coast near Ein Gedi and Masada. They are also permitted to travel north on Route 90 from the Allenby/King Hussein Bridge to the Sea of Galilee. Use of these routes is approved for transit purposes during daylight hours, with stops permitted at only Qumran National Park off Route 90 by the Dead Sea. Each transit requires prior notification to the Consulate General's security office. Personal travel by U.S. Government personnel and family members to Jericho takes place only on certain designated days and requires prior notification. U.S. Government personnel and family members are permitted both official and personal travel on Route 443 between Modi'in and Jerusalem without prior notification, during daylight hours only.

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General Safety and Security  
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¶10. Israeli authorities remain concerned about the continuing threat of terrorist attacks. Two fatal bulldozer attacks on civilians in July 2008 and a March 2008 shooting, all in Jerusalem, and a February 2008 bombing in Dimona are reminders of the ongoing precariousness of the security environment.

¶11. In early January 2009, short-range rockets were fired from Lebanon into northern Israel.

¶12. American citizens are cautioned that a greater danger may exist around restaurants, businesses, and other places associated with U.S. interests and/or located near U.S. official buildings, such as the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv and the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem. American citizens are also urged to exercise a high degree of caution and to use common sense when patronizing restaurants, nightclubs, cafes, malls, places of worship, and theaters, especially during peak hours. Large crowds and public gatherings have been

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targeted by terrorists in the past and should be avoided to the extent practicable. American citizens should take into consideration that public buses, trains, and their respective terminals are "off-limits" to U.S. Government personnel. U.S. Government personnel have been directed to avoid protests and demonstrations. Personnel have also been urged to maintain a high level of vigilance and situational awareness at all times.

¶13. The State Department urges American citizens to remain vigilant while traveling throughout Jerusalem, especially within the commercial and downtown areas of West Jerusalem and the city center. Spontaneous or planned protests within the Old City are possible, especially after Friday prayers. Some of these protests have led to violent clashes. The Old City of Jerusalem is off-limits to U.S. Government personnel and their family members after dark during the entire week and between the hours of 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Fridays.

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Entry/Exit Difficulties  
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¶14. The Government of Israel considers American citizens who also hold Israeli citizenship or have a claim to such dual nationality to be Israeli citizens for immigration and other legal purposes. For example, an American citizen child of an Israeli parent will be considered an Israeli citizen by Israeli immigration officials and Israeli law will apply to the child's travel to, and departure from, Israel.

¶15. American citizens whom Israeli authorities suspect of being of Arab or Muslim origin are likely to face additional, often time-consuming, and probing

questioning by immigration and border authorities, or may even be denied entry into Israel. If they are determined by Israeli authorities to have a claim to residency status in the West Bank or Gaza, or to have a claim to a Palestinian identification number, such American citizens may be required by the Government of Israel to use a Palestinian Authority travel document to transit Israel to enter the West Bank or Gaza. Such a determination could be made for American citizens if they or their immediate family members or grandparents were born in the West Bank or Gaza, currently reside there, or lived there for any appreciable amount of time.

¶16. American citizens who hold a Palestinian Authority ID, as well as persons judged by the Israeli authorities to have claim to a Palestinian Authority ID, will be considered subject to Israeli law and to regulations that Israel applies to residents of the West Bank and Gaza, regardless of the fact that they hold U.S. citizenship. A Palestinian ID number might be active or inactive. If active, the Government of Israel may stamp the Palestinian Identification Number in the U.S. passport, and the American citizen may be required to obtain Palestinian Authority travel documents prior to departing Israel. In addition, American citizens having or eligible for a Palestinian Authority ID who entered Israel via Ben Gurion Airport might be required to depart via the Allenby Bridge to Jordan. Upon arrival, such persons may wish to consider asking Israeli immigration authorities from where they will be required to depart. Additionally, American citizens who have (or who are eligible to receive) a Palestinian Authority Identification Number are likely to be refused entry to Israel via Ben Gurion Airport and told that they must enter Israel from Jordan via the Allenby (also known as King Hussein) Bridge.

¶17. In June 2009, the Israeli government began selectively limiting certain travelers to either the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza, or to

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Israel and Jerusalem. To date, the Israeli government has not provided information about which categories of travelers can expect to be subject to these restrictions. Nonetheless, Israeli border officials at Ben Gurion Airport began requiring certain travelers to sign a form that states s/he is not allowed to enter territories controlled by the Palestinian Authority unless s/he obtains advance authorization from the Israeli "Territory Actions Coordinator," and that violating this restriction may result in the traveler being deported from Israel and barred from entry for up to 10 years. At the Allenby Bridge crossing, as well as at Ben Gurion Airport, Israeli border officials also began using a new entry stamp for certain travelers that states "Palestinian Authority Only." Since travelers entering via the Allenby crossing must transit Israeli checkpoints and Israeli-controlled territory to reach Jerusalem or Gaza, this restriction effectively limits travelers who receive this stamp at Allenby to destinations in the West Bank only. This stamp has been known to be used even with travelers who have no Palestinian or other Arab ancestry, and who would not seem to have any claim to a Palestinian Authority ID.

¶18. The United States Government seeks equal treatment for all American citizens regardless of national origin or ethnicity. American citizens who encounter difficulties are encouraged to contact the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv or the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem at the telephone numbers below.

¶19. Americans in Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip are strongly encouraged to register with the

Consular Sections of the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv or the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem through the State Department's travel registration website, <https://travelregistration.state.gov>. U.S. citizens who require emergency services may telephone the Consulate General in Jerusalem at (972) (2) 628-7137, after hours (for emergencies): (972) (2) 622-7250, or the Embassy in Tel Aviv at (972) (3) 519-7575, after hours (for emergencies): (972) (3) 519-7551.

¶20. Current information on travel and security in Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States and Canada, or, from overseas, 1-202-501-4444. For additional and more in-depth information about specific aspects of travel to these areas, U.S. citizens should consult: the Country Specific Information for Israel, the West Bank and Gaza; and the Worldwide Caution. These along with other Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts and Country Specific Information are available on the Department's Internet website at <http://travel.state.gov>. Up-to-date information on security conditions can also be accessed at <http://usembassy-israel.org.il> or <http://jerusalem.usconsulate.gov>. Additionally, Americans are encouraged to sign up to receive security-related information from the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv via email at the following link:  
<http://telaviv.usembassy.gov/consular/acs/index.aspx>

¶21. Minimize considered.

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